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FROM: Kika de la Garza

WASHINGTON, D C -- Two subcommittees of the House Committee on Agriculture are looking into the recent sale of Commodity Credit Corporation grains for consumption in Soviet Russia.

A joint meeting of the Department Operations Subcommittee, of which I am chairman, and the Livestock and Grains Subcommittee, headed by my fellow-Texan, Rep. Graham Furcell, was called to hear testimony from Administration representatives and other interested witnesses. The transaction, announced early in November by the Department of Agriculture, involves the sale of substantial quantities of government-owned barley, oats, and corn to two North American grain companies for resale to the Russian government.

Our purpose is to look into all aspects of the sale. The Administration's announcement of the transaction, together with subsequent reluctance to provide the public with further details regarding it, has caused a great deal of concern in the Congress and in the farm belt as to the actual circumstances of the sale. The government can't go out and sell substantial quantities of CCC grain at far below the domestic market price, and for resale at an undisclosed price to the Soviet Union, without raising some questions. On the face of the matter, the sale appears to be a direct subsidy to the Russian livestock industry. Our subcommittee hearings were called to give the Department of Agriculture an opportunity to explain the logic of its actions to critics in Congress as well as elsewhere.

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CONGRESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY -- Federal departments and agencies do not always welcome such congressional examinations of their activities. Nevertheless, they are a proper function of Congress and they can be important in focusing attention on matters that affect Americans generally.

I am hopeful that some good will result from my subcommittee's recent exploration of the effectiveness of the Agriculture Department's marketing research activities. It is clear that a disproportionate part of its research resources are devoted to farm production and supply management matters, with too little attention focused on marketing problems. This is a situation we want to change, and if the subcommittee hearings on the subject help to bring about change I feel our work will have been proved worthwhile.

* * *

EMERGENCY CHANNEL-- Recently I reported at some length on my bill proposing a plan of development for the Lower Rio Grande Basin. Now an emergency drainage ditch is being constructed by the Office of Emergency Planning and the Agriculture Stabilization /
/and Conservation/
Service in the vicinity of Lyford, in Willacy County. The emergency channel will follow

the planned route of the Laguna Madre floodwater channel as shown in the proposed plan of development for the Lower Rio Grande. This channel will provide some immediate relief to the area, which is still affected by floodwater from Hurricane Fern.

While this ditch does not extend throughout the entire planned length of the Laguna Madre floodwater channel, it will provide relief to the area most seriously affected at this time. A word of caution is in order. The emergency channel will have a four-foot bottom width and will provide for a very slow rate of removal of any floodwaters. This is in contrast to the planned 120-foot bottom width in the lower reaches of the proposed Laguna Madre floodwater channel which is required to provide an adequate level of protection to the total area. Those who are benefited by the emergency channel should not be lulled into a false sense of security as to what level of protection it will provide. It is, after all, a project to meet emergency conditions.

* * *

CHRISTMAS JOBS -- South Texans who take temporary holiday jobs can collect valuable Social Security credits. For example, a wife who does not work except during holidays periods can build up credits that could qualify her for benefits if she became disabled, or survivor benefits for her family, or possibly some retirement benefits while her husband is still working. Credit for a quarter-year is built up with earnings as low as \$50 for the period. A young person could qualify for disability benefits with credit for as little as six quarters.

* * *

GI INSURANCE LOANS -- The Veterans Administration informs me that ex-servicemen with permanent types of GI insurance may be able to help finance their children's college expenditures with loans on their policies. In such a case, a veteran can borrow up to 94 percent of the policy's cash value, at an interest rate of five percent. It's one more reason for South Texas veterans to hold onto their GI insurance.

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A STATESMAN LEAVES -- With the death of Don Manuel Tello, Mexico lost one of its most valued citizens, the U S lost a friend, the world lost a statesman, scholar and a true gentleman. Among his posts as ambassador to Washington, as foreign minister, as senator, we might mention he served in his early years of service as vice consul at Brownsville. He was a brilliant, yet gentle man. He walked with the greatest and yet remained humble. He served Mexico well and in his devoted service he helped the cause of all mankind.

* * *

VISITORS FROM HOME -- Valley people here for the sugar allocation hearings were: Mr Scott Toothaker, Mr Sam Taylor, Mr Billy Joe Day, Mr Art Beckwith, Mr F C Schaffer, Mr Terry Morrow, Mr Raymond Cowley and Mr Archie Taylor. Also with the group was former 15th District Congressman Joe Kilgore. Other visitors to the office were Mr & Mrs Jack Skaggs of Harlingen.

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